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A

CENTENNIAL ADDRESS,

DELIVERED AT PELHAM, MASS.

JANUARY 16, 1843.

BY

HON. ITHAMAR CONKEY.



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PELHAM, JAN. 16, 1843.

SIR,

In behalf of the citizens of this town we tender our thanks for your able and interesting address delivered this day, on the completion of the first century since the incorporation of the same, and request a copy for the press.

LUTHER CHAPIN,
JOHN RANKIN,
HENRY KINGMAN,
DAVID CONKEY,
JOHN GRAY. } COMMITTEE OF
ARRANGEMENTS.

A D D R E S S.

THIS day completes an entire century since the town of Pelham was incorporated, and took its place among the smaller communities, which make up and constitute the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and we are assembled my friends to commemorate the day. To greet each other on the occasion, and to trace out and mark some of the events which have transpired, and go to form the history of the past. To those of us who are the descendants of the first settlers of the town, it is a season of solemn and interesting reflection. We are led back in our contemplations to the days of our fathers, when they first groped their way hither through the pathless wilderness, and erected their frail dwellings upon these hills—when they endured the hardships and privations incident to the times, and laid the foundations of those civil and religious institutions which their posterity now enjoy. To those who have adopted this town as their residence, and fixed their homes here, it is a time of social and interesting enquiry. They are induced to join in celebrating the Centennial Anniversary of the legal existence of the town—to listen to some of the facts connected with its early history—and to learn something of the character of its first inhabitants—and to all of us, it is a time of grateful remembrance.

Such a celebration as this is of rare occurrence in our country. The recent discovery and settlement of this

land and the youth of our institutions, forbid the idea of frequent festivals of this kind. But few towns even in New England, the land of the pilgrims, where the first settlements in our country were made, have existed as a corporated body two hundred years, and but very few in our immediate neighbourhood have hailed the first century of their legal organization, and it throws a degree of solemn interest over this occasion, when we reflect that that portion of time which we are now considering, is equal to one half the time since the discovery of this country. It is nearly equal to one eighteenth part of the time since the christian era, and it covers a portion less than one sixtieth of the whole time since the creation of the world. Such considerations are of little weight in themselves, but they are calculated to fill the mind with solemnity, and lead us to reflections with special reference to the past.

The formation of societies and social connections among men and their merging from a state of nature to civilized life is a subject of interesting contemplation, and need only to be named to excite a spirit of earnest thought. A state of society when contrasted with a state of nature must not be considered merely artificial, and therefore unnatural, the truth is different. The social state is perfectly congenial to the feelings of the human heart, and may be considered as an innate principle in its nature. Man is a gregarious animal, and is led on by the principles of his nature, to the formation of social connections. Alone, he is a feeble defenceless being incapable of asserting and maintaining his rights, or of redressing his wrongs. The author of his existence has therefore instamped upon his nature the love of his fellow man, invested him with social feelings, and impelled him by the strong principles of self-preserva-

tion to enter into a state of society. The mutuality of affection, the fear of danger, the incapacity of defence, and the wants which cannot be supplied in a state of nature, induce men to associate together and may be considered the basis of civil society.

In a state of nature, and without laws, except the moral law which is always binding upon men, being impelled by their social feelings, they have an undoubted right to associate together and form such a league or form of government as they may choose, and base it upon such fixed principles and rules for the future guide and government of themselves and their posterity as to them may seem meet and proper. Which government when once adopted becomes fixed, and should be considered permanent. And it would be preposterous and absurd to suppose that a people who have an organised government, have a right at any time to throw it off, return to a state of nature, and again form an elementary society. Such a principle is revolutionary, and if adopted there would be no stability in government. Every generation would claim and possess the same right, and revolution would be in perpetual progress. The rights and liberties of the people in such a state would always be at the mercy of the designing and the crafty demagogue. That the people have a right to change the form of their government, and carry out its principles for the general good no one will deny, provided it be done peaceably and according to the then existing forms and established rules, and conformable to the reasonable exercise of their natural rights.

In forming societies and governments, it is easy to perceive that the different individuals composing them, must resign and give up to the community, a certain

portion of their natural liberty, in order to acquire greater benefits to themselves and their children. They must resign a part of their natural rights to acquire social rights. And this surrender is considered the less because that which is gained is vastly superior. Men in all ages have been actuated by these principles; and hence the state of society which has always prevailed and which has been increasing and advancing in moral and intellectual improvement, as the country advances in age, and increases in population.

Civil governments are formed for social purposes. To ameliorate the condition of our race—to elevate the human mind, and to raise our affections from the groveling condition of the savage, and place them on the higher and more noble eminence of intellectual beings. As families and social circles are made up of individuals whose particular localities and interests may be somewhat different; so are states and empires made up of smaller communities, where a diversity of character and interest may prevail, notwithstanding the whole are linked together for more substantial purposes, they are nevertheless dependent one upon the other, and every part has its weight and necessary bearing upon the whole. Like the different members in the human body, they all have their appropriate place and duty. So the different towns composing a state or government are so many parts of the whole body and each has its appropriate importance. It need not be said therefore that a town because it is small in comparison with many others is not important, has no interests to be defended or protected, and has nothing in its history or character which is worthy to be remembered. Such thoughts would be unworthy the occasion, and would lessen the

veneration which all ought to have for their own institutions or those which they have adopted. Every member in the great corporation or government, have a proportionate interest in the whole, and has equal claims to favorable notice, and each has some peculiarities in its history which make it differ from others, hence the manifest attachment the people in each town have for their own institutions, and it may be truly said that, to its own inhabitants the history of every town is peculiarly dear and interesting.

We claim to be the descendants of those who were driven from their native land on account of their religious principles. The Puritan blood has a free circulation in our veins. We venerate our fathers who erected the standard of freedom here, and have maintained it through so many perils and trials. And it requires but an ordinary degree of human sympathy for men of this character to regard with favour, and to listen with interest to the recapitulation of those events which bear upon the particular spot which they have chosen for their residence, much less, the place of their nativity. It is with reverence and filial affection that we attempt to trace out some of those events which have reference to the early history of this town.

The territory which composes this town, is a part of that plot of ground, which was called Equivalent Lands, and which was granted by the State of Massachusetts to Connecticut. In the early settlements of the Country, it was supposed that the towns of Woodstock, Somers, Enfield and Suffield in Connecticut, belonged to Massachusetts, and they were claimed accordingly. The State of Massachusetts exercised jurisdiction over them for many years after they were settled. And al-

though it was discovered that they were included in the boundaries of Connecticut; yet the Government of Massachusetts still claimed them; therefore it was agreed between the two governments, that an equal extent of territory should be given to Connecticut as an equivalent for those towns. In pursuance of which agreement, that territory which now constitute the towns of Belchertown, Ware, Pelham, and part of Prescott were ceded to Connecticut and denominated the *Equivalent Lands*. No portion of this territory was then settled. It remained under the jurisdiction of Massachusetts, the State of Connecticut holding the legal title to the Lands. About the year 1740, those towns in Connecticut threw off the jurisdiction of Massachusetts, and have ever since been considered a part of the State of Connecticut, and been under her civil government.

As early as 1727, a portion of this territory was sold by the State of Connecticut to a company in Boston, of whom the Hon. Jonathan Belcher formerly Governor of Massachusetts was one. Another portion was sold to several gentlemen in Northampton. The titles were given accordingly and a survey of the lands was made. The Rev. Jonathan Edwards was one of the principal proprietors. That part of the equivalent Lands which was included in those conveyances were formerly known by the name of *Cold Spring*, and now constitute the Towns of Belchertown and Ware. This name originated from a noted Spring in the easterly part of the territory. The settlements had advanced at that time from Boston as far west as Brookfield, and up the Connecticut River from New-Haven and Hartford, to Springfield, Hadley, Northampton and Deerfield. And for many years after the Settlement of those places, there were no dwellings between Hadley and Brook-

field, and the travellers were guided by an imperfect track or path through this lonely country. This Spring being about mid way between those places, became a noted watering place, and gave its name to the Town. Which name that territory bore until in the year 1761 it was incorporated into a town and took the name of Belcher's-Town in honor of Governor Belcher—but by common usage, the original pronunciation has been changed, and it is now called Belchertown.

The other part of the equivalent lands, which now constitute the town of Pelham and the greater part of Prescott, was originally sold by the State of Connecticut to Col. John Stoddard and others, of Northampton, and was denominated *Stoddard's-town*. At what time this grant was made is not certianly known, but it was subsequent to the year 1727, and it remained in the possession of Col Stoddard until it was purchased by the actual Settlers.

This Town and the adjacent territory previous to their being settled, were distinguished as being excellent hunting grounds, they abounded with deer, and other valuable game, and much damage was undoubtedly done to the lands by those persons who resorted here for that purpose. It was a practice among the hunters in those days to set a line of fires, encircling a large plot of ground, which burning in every direction would gradually encompass the game in a narrow circle, and so it would become an easy prey to its pursuers. Thus in process of time the native forests which were extensive and valuable, and which covered the lands with a dense foliage were nearly destroyed, and much of the vegetable substance which usually collects in a forest was consumed, thereby rendering the lands less productive, and much less valuable. This practice was con-

tinued many years, and the fires were known to burn in some parts of the territory, especially in low marshy places for several months together.

But those lands which had been thus burned over were soon covered with a species of wild grass, growing rapidly and luxuriantly, thus giving it the appearance of an extensive rolling prairie, and affording very excellent pasturage for cattle. For many years, great numbers of cattle and horses were sent out from the towns on Connecticut River to graze on these hills during the Summer Season, and to make the pasturage sweeter and facilitate its growth, the practice of burning over the lands was continued a considerable time after the first settlement of the place, and in fact until the inhabitants of the town choose a committee to prosecute the offenders, and thus save their lands from further destruction.

At the time of the purchase of this Township, the first Settlers of it resided, most of them, in the town of Worcester. They had formed a company for the purpose of purchasing a Township or part of one, somewhere in this vicinity to settle upon: And like the children of Israel, who sent forward spies to search out the lands which they were to possess, so here, two men were selected and sent forward to examine the territory, and make the preliminary arrangements to purchase and settle upon the lands. Robert Peebles and James Thornton, composed this delegation. They examined the lands, and made the contract with Col. Stoddard for the purchase of the territory and the speedy settlement thereof. And could we be transported back to those days and view this land as it was then situated, see the natural make and construction of the soil, the beautiful streams of water which flow through it, the

granite formations, and the easy and natural facilities for improvement, when compared with some of the adjoining territories, we should be convinced of the wisdom and good judgment manifested in the selection. No spot of ground east of Hadley and west of the then existing settlements in Worcester County, could be found more favorable to successful agricultural improvements. The territory which now constitutes the town of Amherst had been settled a few years previous, it was then called Hadley third Precinct, and their first minister, the Rev. David Parsons, was ordained on the 7th day of Nov., 1739, the same year in which this town was purchased, and surveyed out.

The tract of land being thus bargained for, a contract for settling the place was entered into on the 26th. day of Sept., 1738, between Col. Stoddard on the one part, and Robert Peebles and James Thornton on the other, defining the manner in which the lands should be settled and occupied. Arrangements were immediately made to organize the Proprietors and take possession of the lands. The Company consisted of thirty four persons, and the deed was given on the first day of January 1739, to all of them, naming each, and the proportion of the lands which each should hold. It seems that the territory was to be held in common by the Proprietors, in the proportion of one to sixty, until further set apart to each proprietor. For instance, the deed conveyed to James Thornton, fourteen sixtieth parts; to Robert Peebles five sixtieths, to Wm. Gray one sixtieth, and so on. The first meeting of the Proprietors was holden in Worcester, at the house of Capt. Daniel Hayward on the 26th., day of February 1739, at which meeting a committee was chosen to survey the town, and

lay out sixty-one home-lots, being one for each of the Proprietors, one for the first settled Minister of the place, and one for each of the persons who had agreed to purchase a lot and settle upon it. After passing many other votes in reference to the settlement of the place, the meeting was adjourned to the first day of May then following, at which time the proprietors again met at the same place. The committee made their report, and the Proprietors drew for those lots which had been surveyed. At the same meeting it was "voted that the sum of £15 be allowed and paid towards making a road to the Meeting-house, (so called) and from thence to East-Hadley, (viz.) a bridle road." All the meetings of the Proprietors were held in Worcester, until Aug. 6th., 1740. The first meeting was warned and held at the house of John Fergurson in the Lisbon Proprietary.

The place was then called Lisbon, which name it bore until it was incorporated into a town. The act for incorporating the town passed both branches of the General Court on the 28th day of December, 1742, and received the signature of the Governor and became a law on the 15th day of January following, by the name of Pelham, and on the 19th day of April 1743, the first meeting was held to organise the town. It was bounded when it was incorporated; westerly on Hadley; southerly on Cold-Spring; northerly on Wells-Town; and easterly on a tract of land originally granted to a number of Canada and Narragansit Indians, and called *Quobin*, but which is now the town of Greenwich, and it is remarkable that this town was settled and incorporated many years before either of the adjoining towns, which fact is evidence of the high estimation in

which the lands were held in those days. The name which it took on its incorporation was undoubtedly conferred in honor of Lord Pelham of England who passed through this state about that time, and it is said that he gave a bell for the Church, in consequence of the name and the honor conferred upon him. Surely it would seem that something operated to induce a change in the name, for Lisbon has as poetic and musical a sound as Pelham, and one would suppose it would be as acceptable to the inhabitants. But it is a part of this story that the bell which was so gratefully bestowed was sent to Boston and there disposed of for a trifle to pay the freight and storage. Whatever truth there may be in this story, there are many things to lessen its credit. The inhabitants were then in rather a prosperous condition, they had the cause of religion at heart, and they were susceptible of the finer feelings of gratitude, and it is not to be supposed that under such circumstances they would permit so valuable a present to be trifled away.

The ancestors of the first settlers of this town were Presbyterian emigrants from the north of Ireland, and they brought with them their peculiar feelings and attachments, which are clearly manifested in all their public acts. The following article from the original agreement or indenture for settling the town, entered into between Col. Stoddard, Robert Peebles, and James Thornton, will show that they possessed the true Puritan spirit and blood. (viz.) "It is agreed that families of good conversation be settled on the premises who shall be such as were inhabitants of the kingdom of Ireland or their descendants, being Protestants, and none to be admitted but such as bring good and undeniable

credentials or certificates of their being persons of good conversation and of the Presbyterian persuasion as used in the Church of Scotland; *and conform to the discipline thereof.*—Such were the guards thrown around the first settlers of this town, and such was their character. And it is remarkable to find that the institutions of Religion, and the instruction of the youth were among the first permanent establishments for which they provided. They had hardly seated themselves here, and provided for their daily wants, before they thought of the education of their children, the improvement of their own minds, and the salvation of their souls. In the first survey of the town a lot of land was laid out and reserved in the most eligible spot on which to set a Meeting-house, and a lot of one hundred acres was sequestered and set apart for the first settled minister of the place, and as early as August 6, 1740, less than two years from the time of the purchase and probably within one year and a half, of the first settlement of the place, the Proprietors, “voted to build a Meeting-house, to raise £100 towards building it, and choose a committee to agree with a workman to raise the house and provide for settling a minister.”—The necessary provisions were made to build a Meeting-house as fast as could be expected with the means then in their power during the winter and summer following. At what time it was raised is not certainly known. On the 19th day of May, 1741, the proprietors “voted to raise £120 for the second payment for the Meeting-house, and choose a committee to provide for raising it,” and on the 1st day of September 1741 they “voted to raise £100, for the last payment for the Meeting-house, and that it be set upon the land that is cleared on the west side of the

cross road." The place where it now stands. It is most probable that it was raised in the fall of 1741, but there was not much more done to it, except the rough enclosing, until 1743. On the 19th day of April 1743, a Meeting was held at the *Meeting-house*, and on the 26th day of May, of the same year, the town "voted that there be a committee chosen to provide glass and glaze the Meeting-house, to build a pulpit and underpin the house at the charge of the town." Public schools for the education of the children were about the same time set up and established, which were well regulated and conducted, and which were kept during the summer seasons for many years in the Meeting-house, and until other places were provided by the town. In 1755, the town "voted to build three school houses, one at the Meeting-house; one at the west end of the town, and one on the east hill." The Meeting-house was not finished for many years, after it was raised, and the people worshipped in it a long time before the pews were built, and some time before the doors were made. It was however finished according to the fashion and style of finishing houses of public worship in those days, and has been repaired from time to time, as occasion required. In 1818, it was removed a few feet from its first location, and underwent a thorough repair. This house has always been the regular, and only place of public worship for the people of this town. It has stood through many religious commotions, and it has been the rallying point of the good and the virtuous for many ages. One hundred winters have blown their bleak blasts upon it since it was erected, and it still remains a sound monument of the pious devotions of its founders, but like all earthly things, it is going to decay,

the fashion of it passeth away. It has become old, and must soon be laid aside as one of the worthless things of time and be forgotten.

After providing for the erection of a house of public worship, the settlement of a minister lay next to the hearts of this people. Not forgetting their puritan principles, and the cause for which their ancestors had fled from their native land, they engaged in good earnest, to settle a minister and secure to themselves the blessings which always flow to a people who regard the Sabbath and the institutions of religion. They had first set their affections upon a Mr. Johnston, as appears by their records, for we find that in Sept. 1741, Matheus Gray was directed to go to Londonderrey, with a call to the Rev. Mr. Johnston. This call was not however accepted, and whether he ever preached here afterwards is not known. On the 11th day of May, 1742, the proprietors voted to intercede with the Rev. Robert Abercrombie to supply them as far as he could during the summer following, he soon after commenced preaching to them, and a church which was Presbyterian in its form was organized in 1743, he continued to preach here most of the time until the 5th day of March 1744, a call was given to him to settle with them in the ministry, he accepted the call and was ordained on the 30th day of August, of the same year. The sermon was preached by the Rev. Jonathan Edwards, then minister of Northampton, and afterwards President of Princeton College in New Jersey. The ordaining council consisted of Rev. Jonathan Edwards, Rev. John Moorhead, Rev. David McGregor, Rev. David Parsons, Rev. David White, Mr.— Billings and John Graham.

The Rev. Mr. Abercrombie was a native of Scotland,

He was educated at Edinburgh, and was not only considered an eminent divine, but one of the first scholars of the age. He had resided as a student seven years at the University, had studied all the branches of science usually taught there, and he was familiar with the Hebrew, Greek, and Latin languages. His library, which was very extensive for a clergyman in those days, was written mostly in those languages and contained most of the standard works upon Theology. It is now in a tolerable degree of preservation in the possession of one of his descendants. The successors of the Rev. Mr. Abercrombie in the ministry in this town, were Rev. Richard G. Graham, Nathaniel Merrill, Andrew Oliver, Elijah Brainard, and Winthrop Bailey. Thus we see how early and how devoted the first settlers of this town were to their religious institutions.

The peculiar situation of the town, being about eight miles in length, and about four in breadth; and composed of two hills or eminences, with a deep valley between them extending the whole breadth of the town from north to south, in which is the bed of the west branch of Swift river, and the Meetinghouse being erected on the western hill those inhabitants who had settled at the easterly part of the town found it inconvenient to worship at the same place. In consequence of which on the 28th day of June 1786, the east part of the town with a portion of New Salem was incorporated into a Parish by the name of the *Second Parish* in Pelham. A Meetinghouse was afterwards erected, and the Rev. Mathias Carrier settled as their first minister. Rev. Sebastian C. Cabbot succeeded him. The same territory was afterwards on the 28th day of Janu-

ary 1822, incorporated into a town by the name of Prescott. The Rev. Ebenezer Brown was installed in 1827. He resigned in 1835. Rev. Job Cushman succeeded him for a short time, and the Rev. Francis Wood, the present minister was soon after settled.

Within a few years past a division of the people has taken place upon some points of religious discipline, and a new society has been formed at the west part of the town of the Methodist Episcopal persuasion. In the year 1840, the people belonging to these two societies, with a commendable spirit and energy erected each of them a house of public worship of a more modern style and fashion, and more conformable to the advancing improvements of the age. These houses have been finished and the societies who worship in them appear to be in a prosperous condition, and are extending to each other a spirit of philanthropy and christian charity.

But although the people of this town have generally regarded the institutions of religion and of the sabbath. Yet the weather has not always been fair and the sea calm. Clouds have sometimes appeared to darken their hemisphere, and breakers have occasionally arose to endanger their course. Dissensions have at various periods crept in to mar their happiness and the flood-gates of error have been opened upon them, and strange if they have not. Strange indeed if the people here have escaped the deluge of erroneous principles which have spread far and wide. It would be an anomaly if a town even in this land of the pilgrims should remain long quiet amid all the various sects, persuasions and yankee notions which prevail and gain credit in this

land. Where is the town in our midst which has not been rent with religious dissensions? Which have not groaned under defections and perils both by sea and land and among false brethren? Where is the town which has not been infested with the voice of the dissenter, and the conscientious scrupler? Where an achan has not crept into the camp to draw away the unwary from the right path of duty, and lead them into the ways of contention, jealousies, and evil speaking. An honest difference of opinion upon some questions of theological construction is to be expected, and a free interchange of sentiments is to be cherished, so long as it leads to harmonious reconciliations. This town has sometimes suffered by those defections, but for the honor of its inhabitants, evangelical truth has generally been regarded, the gospel has been preached here most of the time, and the Church which was organized here one hundred years ago, has been continued in its purity, and should the year 1843 be permitted to pass away like those which have gone before it, and the world still turn upon its axis, we shall have reason to believe that it will yet be continued many years to come.

Civil liberty, like their religion, was always cherished and regarded as a fundamental principle among this people. It was closely allied to the causes of the exile of their ancestors and must necessarily be maintained in order to secure their religious freedom. Hence they early joined the patriotic band who resisted the oppressions of the mother country. When the exactions of the government of Great Britain had become so burdensome as not to be endured, and its officers so insolent as to be offensive to their notions of equality and

justice. When supplication for grievances had become useless and the hand of oppression had grasped the liberties of the country, the people of this town were behind no others in resisting those encroachments and setting at defiance that government whose duty it was to protect rather than oppress. As early as November 3, 1773, a declaration of their views upon this subject was made in a communication addressed to the State Committee at Boston, in which they say among other good things, "We are not at present much intimidated with that pompous boasting on the other side the waters, viz. that Great Britain could blow America into atoms." And on the 20th day of June 1776, fourteen days before the declaration of Independence, the following vote was passed, "Voted by unanimous vote that we are willing to come under independence from under the yoke of the king of Great Britain. Provided the Continental Congress see fit in their wisdom to establish Independence in the Colonies for their safety." Truly, they were not much intimidated at the pompous boastings of their lordly oppressors, and they were willing to go for independence, and at all times to suffer and to contribute in that glorious cause. The burdens and privations of the people in those days were many and great. The struggle for independence was hard and long, and doubtful, and the burdens were shared by all with commendable unanimity. The records of this town abundantly show how steady, persevering and consistent was the course this people pursued in that struggle, and how largely they contributed towards the means to carry on the war to its successful termination. The regular drafts of men and pro-

visions were cheerfully furnished, and those who from infirmity or age could not march to the field of strife, were employed in combined effort to furnish the supplies, gather the harvests, and take care of the families of those who were contending with the enemy in the field.

Among all the civil and religious commotions which have taken place during the last century, the cause of education has not been forgotten. The attention which was early given to the subject of common schools in this town, I have before alluded to. The same interest in this vitally important institution has marked its progress in every age. The first introduction of free schools for the education of all the children both of the rich and the poor, is the rightful boast of Massachusetts. The first free school which was ever established in the civilized world, was set up in Boston by our Pilgrim fathers. As early as 1635, soon after the settlement of that town, a school was established, in which all the children were taught at the public expense. And in 1647, the same principle was incorporated into the Government of the State, and all the towns were required to set up and maintain free schools for the education of the children without distinction. This principle being thus established, it has cherished and grown up with the people, and became a darling object with their posterity. Thus the people of this town inherited the laudable principle of maintaining common schools for the education of all, and their records show liberal grants for that purpose. Every year since the first settlement of the place, and I believe it may be truly said that no town in this vicinity has been more de-

voted to that subject than this, and none where the schools have been better regulated and more promptly attended. But few of the inhabitants have aspired to higher attainments in literature, but few have devoted themselves to the study of the higher branches in science and made a profession their occupation. Still nearly all have attained sufficient education to enable them to become useful and virtuous citizens. All have had an opportunity to enjoy and improve by those inestimable privileges, which the foresight, benevolence, and liberality of their fathers had established and cherished.

By the observance of this day we are taught many important lessons, and not the least among them is a venerable remembrance of the charter of our ancestors. A charter which was strongly marked with attachment to principle and a persevering energy in accomplishing its object. We would not attribute to them an extraordinary degree of perfection, nor regard their conduct as faultless. They had their faults and their full share of the infirmities of human nature, and we should not be willing to subscribe to all their social customs. The advancing improvements in civilization and the arts, forbid us to copy all their practices. The multiplication of the means of information and the corresponding light which has been diffused through the land has furnished our generation with sources of information far superior to those enjoyed by them. We do not come here to find fault, nor to quarrel with the past. It is much more pleasant to talk about the virtues than the vices of our race. Our ancestors possessed spirits bound together by strong affection and nerved with anxiety, and after allowing every defect in their characters

which truth would suggest, there remain many qualities which we ought, and which we cannot but admire. We ought ever to be thankful to the all-wise Creator, who sustained them in their perilous enterprises, and made them what they were. They were guided by a spirit of philanthropy, and were filled with concern for their posterity. They acted in no selfish style, and they laid the foundations of those institutions, which will last for ages if their descendants are not wickedly degenerate, they provided whatever in their wisdom was for the best interest of those who should come after them and those institutions were the richest legacy which they could leave to their children. We have entered into their labors, and on us of the present generation, must rest the responsibility. It becomes us then to improve upon the means placed in our power.

The social feelings of every community are characterized by the degree of education and religious principle which are cultivated among the inhabitants. Hence we may judge of the amount of happiness enjoyed in a town by its public institutions and the devotion of its inhabitants to their civil and religious privileges. In all communities where civil liberty is estimated the highest, the inhabitants are the most enlightened, and where civil and religious dissensions prevail the people are usually regardless of those institutions, and of the cultivation and improvement of their own minds, and those of their children. We are thus called upon to contribute our exertions to sustain those institutions, and to improve upon them, let nothing valuable be lost, but add to them, for the good of coming generations. The time in which we can act is fast passing away, our years at most will be but few, an-

other century has just now commenced, and before it shall have passed away with its millions of incidents, changes and revolutions, we shall have all followed our departed ancestors and joined the silent congregation. So live then, to improve your talents, and so hand down the inheritance to your children, that when another hundred years shall have passed away, and when your descendants shall have gathered around their altar to celebrate its closing events, they can look back upon your conduct with approbation and heartfelt gratitude.

Note by a Clergyman.

The public exercises were performed in the new Congregational Meetinghouse erected on the ground originally set apart for public purposes, near to the ancient sanctuary, and the grave yard where the fathers of the town sleep in dust. An appropriate prayer was offered by Rev. W. P. WHITE, of the Methodist Church, the singing of ancient and choice tunes was spirited and in good taste, and the dinner provided by Mr. CALVIN D. EATON, of which about 150 ladies and gentlemen afterwards partook, was excellent and well served. Among the guests were a daughter and several descendents of Rev. Mr. ABERCROMBIE, the first minister of the town, one of whom was the Orator of the day, a maternal grandson. Addresses were offered at the table by several Clergymen, congratulating the people of the town on the sacred and interesting recollections of the occasion, commending the harmony and good feeling with which the whole business of the celebration had been conducted, and exhorting the different churches to the cultivation of christian kindness and courtesy.

The weather was pleasant, the company was cheerful and happy, and every thing conspired to make the day joyous to the inhabitants of Pelham, and those natives of the town who were present from other places.

REV. B. B. EDWARDS'S ADDRESS

AT THE

CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION,

SOUTHAMPTON, MASS.

July 23, 1841.

